



The Disciplines of Detachment: Fasting & Simplicity

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The Call to Go Deeper



The word *discipleship* and
the word *discipline* are the same
word
-- that has always fascinated me.
Once you have made the choice
to say,
"Yes, I want to follow Jesus," the
question is,
"What disciplines will help me
remain faithful to that choice?"
If we want to be disciples of Jesus,
we have to live a disciplined life.
- Henri Nouwen

The Consequence of the Fall



K.O. Lab (2001) "Live"

“After Adam had passed through the center of himself and emerged on the other side to escape from God by putting himself between himself and God, he had mentally reconstructed the whole universe in his own image and likeness.”

- Thomas Merton, *The New Man*

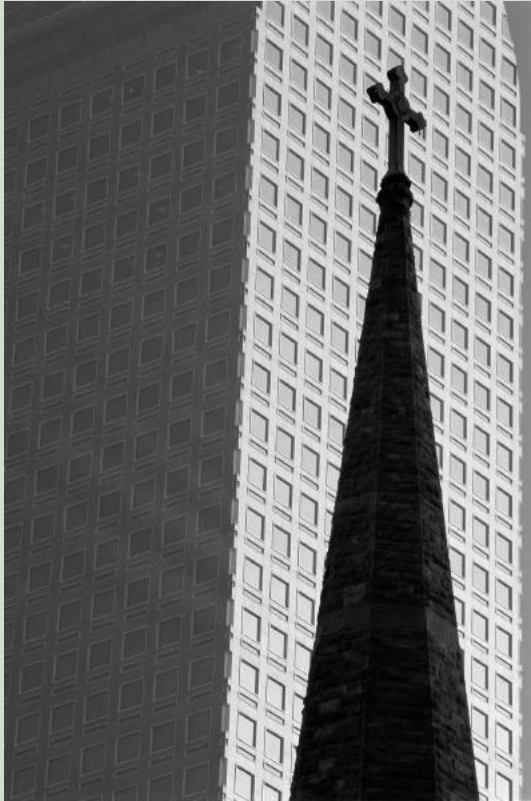
Losing Our Central Truth



Kendell Geers (2005) "In the Garden of Eden"

“Everyone of us is shadowed by an illusory person: a false self. This is the man I want myself to be but cannot exist, because God does not know anything about him.”
- Thomas Merton, “New Seeds of Contemplation.”

The Call of Jesus



“Then He said to them all: “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

- Luke 9:23 (NIV)

The Enemies of the Cross



Martin Creed (2004) "Things"

“For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.”

- Philippians 3:18-19

The Quest for Reality



Red Sniper (2001) "Terrorrealismus"

"If you look carefully you will see that there is one thing and only one thing that causes unhappiness. The name of that thing is Attachment. What is an attachment? An emotional state of clinging caused by the belief that without some particular thing or some person you cannot be happy."

- Anthony de Mello



Two Prime Sins: Gluttony & Avarice

“These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, ‘In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.’“

- Jude 16-18



The Wisdom of the Early Church

Evagrius Ponticus (349–399 AD), a monastic theologian in Egypt, is believed to be the first writer to record and systematize certain teachings of the predominately illiterate Desert Fathers. A prominent feature of his research was a list of eight evil passions.

While he did not create the list from scratch, he is credited with refining and developing it. His list of passions were, in order of increasing seriousness: **gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, anger, acedia, vainglory, and pride**. Acedia (from the Greek "akedia," or "not to care") denoted "spiritual sloth." Evagrius intended for this list to be used for diagnostic purposes. One cannot resist temptation without being aware of how it operates.



The Early Church on Gluttony



Abba John the Short, advising the young brothers to love fasting, told them frequently: "The good soldier, undertaking to capture a strongly fortified, enemy city, blockades food and water.

In this way the resistance of the enemy is weakened and he finally surrenders.

Something similar happens with carnal impulses, which severely war against a person in his youth.

Blessed fasting subdues the passions and the demons and ultimately removes them far from the combatant."

"And the powerful lion," he told them another time, "frequently falls into a snare because of his gluttony, and all of his strength and might disappear."

- Philokalia (Fourth to Sixth Centuries)

The Early Church on Avarice



There are three kinds of avarice. The first does not permit renunciants to be deprived of their wealth and property. The second persuades us by a still greater covetousness to take back what we have dispersed and distributed to the poor. The third demands that we long for and acquire what in fact we did not possess before.

– John Cassian

The Biblical Answer to Attachment



“Set your mind
on the things
above, not on
the things on
the earth.”
- Colossians 3:2

The Discipline of Fasting



Kendell Geers (2001) "Be[l]ieve"

Voluntary
abstinence of
any good
thing for the
sake of God

Jesus on Fasting



“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.”

- Matthew 6:16

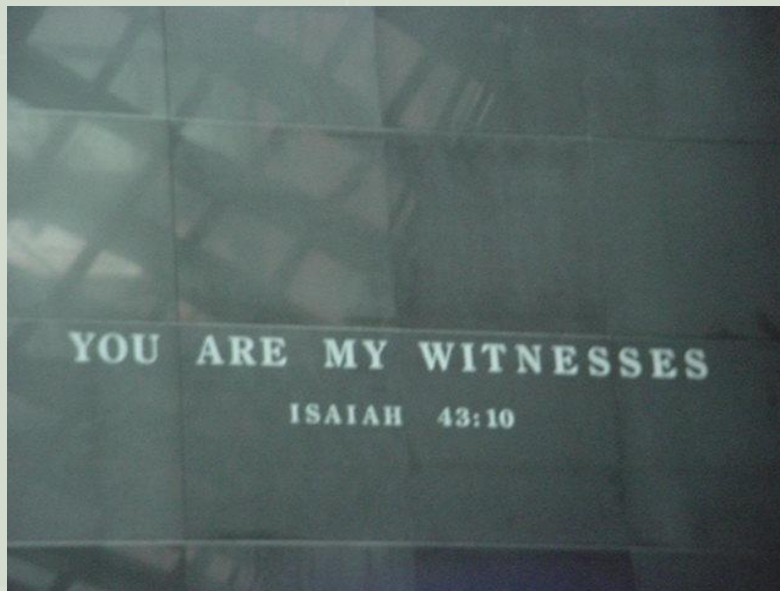
The Way of Fasting



“To come to the pleasure you have not, you must go by a way in which you enjoy not....”

- John of the Cross

Practical Steps in Fasting



- Who?
- How?
- When?
- How Long?
- Why?

The Discipline of Simplicity



“Live simply
so that
others may
simply live”



Jesus on Simplicity


"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

- Matthew 6:25-26





First Steps in Simplicity

- Do I have some possessions that complicate my life but don't really bring me any enjoyment?
 - What are some things that do bring me enjoyment but may not be worth the cost in time, money, and concern?
 - Do I buy things I don't need, won't use, or can't afford?
 - What do I really need, and what do I merely want?
 - Am I consuming more of my fair share of the resources available? What am I doing to help those who are less fortunate than myself? Is there some of my surplus that could benefit others with less?
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The Promise of Detachment



“I must not attempt to control God’s actions, I must not count the stages in the journey He would have me make. I ask Him to make a saint of me, yet I must leave to Him the choice of that saintliness itself and still more the choice of the means which lead to it.”
– Mother Teresa of Calcutta



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Habits of the Heart #5 – Simplicity and Fasting

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